

PISHAUN, WILLOW CREEK, BENFON LAKE
NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGES

MONTANA

May 1 - August 31, 1960

REFUGE PERSONNEL

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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

Charlo, Montana

PISEKUN, WILLOW CREEK, BENTON LAKE
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Narrative Report
May 1 - August 31, 1950

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I. GENERAL

A. Weather Conditions

Weather data for the Pishkun-Willow Creek-Benton Lake areas is obtained from the office of the County Agent in Choteau. Conditions for the period are summarized below:

	<u>1950</u>		
	<u>Prec.</u>	<u>Max. Temp.</u>	<u>Min. Temp.</u>
May	.23	80	34
June	4.44	87	31
July	1.40	90	40
August	1.13	89	34
Total	7.20		

Average for Five Preceding Years

	<u>Prec.</u>	<u>Max. Temp.</u>	<u>Min. Temp.</u>
May	2.26	75.8	20.6
June	38.6	87.6	35.8
July	1.37	92.6	39.2
August	1.08	93.2	37.2
Total	8.47		

B. Water Conditions

Gauge readings are received each month from the office of the Greenfields Irrigation District in Fairfield.

There is no water at Benton Lake except a very small stream at the north end which normally dries up during the summer. At the south end of the refuge a stock watering tank has been dug, being filled by underground seepage. A windmill and gasoline pump at the north end supplements the flow of water from the stream to provide water for stock in that area.

Water elevation changes at Fishkum and Willow Creek reservoirs are summarized below:

Fishkum

Crest of Spillway - 4374

Bottom of Outlet - 4342

<u>End of:</u>	<u>1950</u>	<u>1949</u>	<u>1948</u>	<u>1947</u>	<u>1946</u>	<u>1945</u>
May	4367.9	4370.6	4370.5	4368.4	4370.4	4367.7
June	4370.0	4364.8	4367.6	4371.0	4371.0	4368.5
July	4366.3	4362.0	4364.1	4362.7	4365.3	4353.9
August	4359.0	4362.8	4362.2	4366.6	4363.4	4367.7

Willow Creek

Crest of Spillway - 4142

Bottom of Outlet - 4085

<u>End of:</u>	<u>1950</u>	<u>1949</u>	<u>1948</u>	<u>1947</u>	<u>1946</u>	<u>1945</u>
May	4132.3	4134.0	4135.1	4134.8	4131.5	4137.0
June	4138.7	4133.5	4140.1	4138.4	4136.6	4138.5
July	4138.9	4121.0	4139.4	4131.2	4135.5	4134.6
August	4137.0	4110.5	4132.7	4127.8	4125.9	4128.2

II. WILDLIFE

There has been little opportunity for observations of wild-life at these refuges in recent years. They were visited briefly during the period, however, and some observations were made.

At Fishkum very few waterfowl were seen. The most common birds there during the week June 6 to June 14 were long-billed curlews and white pelicans. A few mallards, pintails and gadwalls were seen at the lower end of the reservoir. One brood of mallards was seen in the outlet canal below the dam and another in a small pothole.

The area around Fishkum is grazed regularly, and although it is probably not overgrazed, there is little good nesting cover adjacent to the reservoir. There is better nesting cover around some of the potholes on the easement area below the reservoir.

At Willow Creek, Canada geese, mallards, pintails, gadwalls and baldpates were present in limited numbers. Long-billed curlews and white pelicans were quite common.

There is fairly good nesting cover on about 160 acres at the southwest corner of Willow Creek Refuge. This nesting area has been fenced off and it is believed that more birds will nest there next season. Three or four broods of ducks were seen on the reservoir near the nesting area but they were too far away to identify.

Both Pishkun and Willow Creek Refuges seem to be more important as nesting areas during migration than as nesting or breeding grounds.

No waterfowl were seen at Benton Lake, but one brood of ducks along the creek was reported by one of the ranchers in the vicinity of the refuge. Several of the ranchers have reported seeing antelope on the refuge at various times during the past year. Seven were reported by one rancher. Mule deer are seen fairly often, but are not numerous.

III. REFUGE DEVELOPMENT AND MAINTENANCE

One and one-half miles of fence was constructed to exclude cattle from the nesting area at Willow Creek. Steel posts, cedar posts and the frames from an old jack fence were used, extending along either side of the nesting area from the boundary fence into the reservoir. Inasmuch as the reservoir has a sloping shoreline and the water level in the reservoir varies considerably, it will probably be necessary to later fence off the lower end of the nesting area to give it full protection from grazing cattle.

IV. ECONOMIC USE

A. Pishkun and Willow Creek

Grazing at Pishkun and Willow Creek is controlled by the Greenfields Irrigation District at Fairfield.

B. Benton Lake

Six permits were issued during the period for grazing on Unit 1-C for a total of 393 head of cattle, not to exceed 2,481 AUM's. Also in effect during the period were five annual grazing permits on the outside units, totaling 1,864 AUM's. One agriculture permit is in effect.

Five permits were issued for harvesting a total of approximately 110 tons of hay.

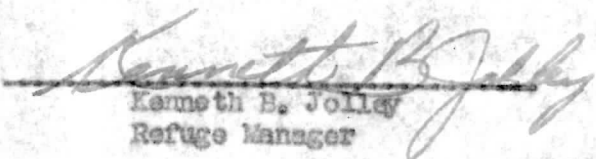
V. PUBLIC RELATIONS

E. Fishing

Fishing is permitted on Pishkun and Willow Creek Refuges, subject to federal and state regulations. Little information is available concerning the amount of fishing on these reservoirs or the size and character of the fish population.

It is quite possible that a public relations problem will develop at these two refuges. There is an increasing amount of agitation on the part of sportsmen to legalize the use of boats on the reservoirs. The use of boats is at present prohibited by federal regulation.

Respectfully Submitted:


Kenneth B. Jolley
Refuge Manager

Completed September 10, 1950

APPROVED _____

Regional Director



Stringing wire at Willow Creek



Where ground was soft wire had to be strung by hand



A few of the posts could be driven, but most of them
had to be "planted" with bar and shovel